

Appn No. 09/575,131
Amdt. Dated May 20, 2004
Response to Office action of March 17, 2004

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REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Claims

The Examiner rejected claims 1-16. By this amendment, independent claims 1 and 10 have been amended. Therefore claims 1-16 remain pending in the application.

Claim Rejections – 35 U.S.C. 103

Claims 1-16 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Okimoto et al (U.S. Pat. No. 6,426,799) in view of Uchida et al (U.S. Pat. No. 6,327,610).

The rejection is respectfully traversed. The present invention as defined in the claims is very different from the systems disclosed and suggested in Okimoto et al and Uchida et al. An example of one embodiment of the present invention is shown at the top of Fig. 1 of the present specification, where the printed mail item document of the claims is shown as a "request form" (1) and where the coded data of the claims is shown as a series of circles (4) printed in invisible infrared ink on the same "request form" (1). The specification defines such printed mail item documents as netpages, as described for example at page 4, lines 21-24:

"In its preferred form, the netpage system relies on the production of, and human interaction with, netpages. These are pages of text, graphics and images printed on ordinary paper, but which work like interactive web pages. Information is encoded on each page using ink which is substantially invisible to the unaided human eye. The ink, however, and thereby the coded data, can be sensed by an optically imaging pen and transmitted to the netpage system."

On the other hand, both Okimoto et al and Uchida et al disclose systems for receiving, manipulating, and printing electronic mail, where the electronic mail is printed using only ordinary printers that do not print coded data readable by an optically imaging sensing device. Further neither Okimoto et al nor Uchida et al disclose such a sensing device that reads coded data printed on a document.

So as to clarify the features of the present invention as defined in the claims, independent method claim 1 and independent system claim 10 have been amended to explicitly state that the coded data includes an indication of its own location relative to the printed document. Such a limitation is not disclosed or fairly suggested in either Okimoto et al or Uchida et al. The Examiner cited Okimoto et al at col. 5, lines 39-45 as disclosing coded data including an indication of at least one reference point on a document. However those lines of Okimoto et al describe only an ordinary document header printed on an electronic mail message. Such header data is clearly very different from the coded data of the present amended claims as the header data contain no indication of the data's own location relative to a document.

Support for the above amendment to the claims concerning coded data indicative of its own location relative to a document is found in the present specification as filed at page 9, lines 41-42, where the coded data is referred to as a "tag": *"A location-indicating tag contains a tag ID which, when translated through the tag map associated with the tagged region, yields a unique tag location within the region."*

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Next, the present independent claims have been further amended to clarify that the sensing device is an optically imaging sensing device used to read the coded data printed on the document. That limitation is also neither disclosed nor fairly suggested in either Okimoto et al nor Uchida et al. The Examiner cited Uchida et al at col. 8, lines 42-52 as disclosing a sensing device. However those lines of Uchida et al disclose only the operations of an "accepting station 250" that is used to receive electronic mail over a network. Such an accepting station (250), indicated in Uchida et al as being a terminal unit of an electronic mail system (col. 6, lines 48-50) is not at all analogous to an optically imaging sensing device as defined in the present amended claims.

Support for the above amendment to the claims concerning an optically imaging sensing device is found in the present specification as filed at page 4, lines 23-24, where the sensing device is referred to as a "pen": *"The ink, however, and thereby the coded data, can be sensed by an optically imaging pen and transmitted to the netpage system."* Further support is found in Fig. 8, which shows an illustration of such a sensing device, and in the specification at page 13, line 39, to page 14, line 2:

"The active sensing device of the netpage system is typically a pen 101, which, using its embedded controller 134, is able to capture and decode IR position tags from a page via an image sensor. The image sensor is a solid-state device provided with an appropriate filter to permit sensing at only near-infrared wavelengths. As described in more detail below, the system is able to sense when the nib is in contact with the surface, and the pen is able to sense tags at a sufficient rate to capture human handwriting (i.e. at 200 dpi or greater and 100 Hz or faster). Information captured by the pen is encrypted and wirelessly transmitted to the printer (or base station), the printer or base station interpreting the data with respect to the (known) page structure."

The limitations of the presently amended claims therefore clearly distinguish the present invention over the prior art of Okimoto et al and Uchida et al. The present dependent claims also include further novel and nonobvious features over the disclosures of Okimoto et al and Uchida et al. For example, regarding claims 7 and 14, the Examiner stated that Uchida, at col. 6, lines 62-67 and col. 7, lines 1-5, discloses wherein the at least one action of the sensing device in relation to the registration form includes the formation of handwritten text and/or markings on the document. However those lines of Uchida et al discuss only the operation of an electronic mail storage unit (140) and do not make any mention of handwritten text and/or markings on a document.

Further, regarding claims 8 and 15, the Examiner states that Okimoto at col. 7, lines 25-31 disclose including printing the coded data so as to be at least substantially invisible in the visible spectrum. However those lines of Okimoto discuss only the operation of a standard printer driver (30) and do not make any mention of coded data that is substantially invisible in the visible spectrum.

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Because the limitations of the presently amended claims are neither disclosed nor suggested in the prior art cited by the Examiner, and because the present amendments to the claims are fully supported by the specification as originally filed, it is submitted that the application is now in condition for allowance. Reconsideration and allowance of the application is courteously solicited.

Very respectfully,

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